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President: Mr. Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 23

United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage

The President: Today, the General Assembly, pursuant to resolution 56/8 of 21 November 2001, will mark the end of the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage, under agenda item 23, entitled "United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage".

It has been said that culture is the mirror of humanity and that cultural heritage represents the historical record and understanding of the entire spirit of a people in terms of its values, actions, works, institutions, monuments and sites. The current Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) aptly described it in his message:

> "The cultural heritage of a people is the memory of its living culture. It is expressed in many different forms, both tangible and intangible. The origins of this heritage are multifarious too. In retracing its own cultural lineage, in recognizing the many different influences that have marked its history and shaped its identity, a people is better able to build peaceful relations with other peoples to pursue what is often an age-old dialogue and to forge its future."

On 21 November 2001, the General Assembly adopted resolution 56/8 to proclaim the year 2002 as the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage to raise awareness of the importance of protecting the world cultural heritage. The resolution invited the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to serve as the lead agency for the Year.

Cultural heritage is a testimony of everyday life. It includes monumental remnants as well as industrial heritage, local and indigenous knowledge, handicrafts, design, language, oral traditions, rites and beliefs, music, dance and song, medicinal and culinary traditions and so on.

All too often, heritage is the target of destruction by virtue of its value as a symbol and an identity. An attack on cultural heritage symbolizes attack on the group as such and indicates intolerance and hostility. The protection of heritage and its transmission to future generations are therefore ethical imperatives.

The proclamation of the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage took place just nine months after the destruction of two giant 1,500-year-old sculptures of Buddha, representing a culture of tolerance in the Afghan Valley of Bamiyan. This barbarous act of the Taliban shocked the whole world and has been considered as a symbol of crimes against culture, but it is not the only example of cultural vandalism. Bosnia's cultural heritage was systematically destroyed to wipe out all traces of the past shared by the different communities. I recall the beauty of the well-known old bridge at Mostar, which not only connected two parts of one town, but also gave the name to the town and

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symbolized the symbiosis of Mostar's communities. It does not exist any more. Today, UNESCO and the World Bank are coordinating the work of multicultural teams rebuilding the Mostar bridge. I strongly believe that the new Mostar bridge will again symbolize tolerance and help to bridge the dark periods of the region's history.

I come from a region rich in cultural sites that have suffered from wars, plundering and, most recently, from flooding. We need protection strategies against natural disasters which have destroyed important cultural heritage sites.

Armed conflict poses the most obvious risk to the destruction of cultural heritage. As a result, the first international instrument on the protection of cultural heritage focused on this area. In 1954, UNESCO adopted the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, strengthened by two Protocols. In 1970, the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property was adopted to combat plundering and trafficking of such property.

Thirty years ago, the 1972 Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, another fundamental pillar and the most popular and well-known in the body of legal text on heritage, was adopted. Today, the number of States parties has reached 175 and the Convention stands as a vital instrument for concrete action in preserving threatened cultural and natural sites. Furthermore, the Convention drew up the World Heritage List, which today includes 730 sites — 563 cultural, 144 natural and 23 mixed — in 125 countries. Bearing witness to exceptional achievements of civilizations and nature, these sites enjoy recognition for their outstanding universal value. On this special occasion, I would like to encourage countries that have not yet joined the Convention and other related international heritage protection instruments to do so at the earliest opportunity. I also urge the active involvement of institutions, organizations and individuals at the international, national and local levels to protect and preserve our common cultural heritage and to share the financial responsibilities.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): In the framework of the many social, political, economic and other issues of which the United Nations is seized, questions concerning culture are of a particular nature because, given sometimes conflicting economic and diverse political interests, cultural dialogue among peoples can serve to find common grounds of rapprochement, contact and cooperation. Such common grounds can help everyone to understand the manner and conditions in which others live.

Hence, the special importance of the issue before us today. If culture and cultural dialogue play this pivotal role in international relations, what then is the role of cultural heritage, one of the most significant sources of human civilization, irrespective of its origin or name? Cultural heritage is a cumulative product of diverse human experiences bequeathed to us by our ancestors as testimonies of their lives. It has recorded for us facts and experiences, either through the carving of sculpture in stone, metal or writing on stone or leather, such as poetry or cave drawings. These are all forms of human testimony to the long and arduous road that humankind has traversed — a long chain of varied experiences, successes and failures alike.

Our duty to our forebears makes us responsible not only for protecting and preserving their heritage, but also for studying it and extracting whatever eternal humanistic lessons and values it contains and passing them along to future generations that will carry the torch of hope on humankind's journey. It is incumbent upon us, today more than ever, to search for, reflect upon and grasp our cultural heritage so that we may explore the roots that it shares with other peoples and civilizations. It is up to us to find those roots, which constitute evidence of the common origins and destiny of all peoples of the world.

It is against this backdrop that the international community is today marking the end of the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage, in which 40 countries representing the five continents, including my own, have actively participated. The Year has brought together the various cultures and civilizations, demonstrating the noble message and objective that have united their representatives, despite their diversity and differences, to rally around a common goal: the maintenance of the common cultural heritage of humankind.

The proclamation of 2002 as the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage and the celebration this year of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption in 1972 of the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural

and Natural Heritage give fresh impetus to enhancing universal awareness of the importance of common efforts to protect and promote that heritage, especially since 175 States have acceded to the Convention. The Convention was adopted 30 years ago to highlight the dangers facing the international community not just in terms of conventional factors, such as the passage of time and the erosion of cultural heritage, but also through changing social and economic factors that contribute to the loss of that heritage. Such great losses have affected the wealth of human cultural heritage in many parts of the world. Humankind has lost priceless cultural treasures and monuments that cannot be replaced. As the President of the General Assembly has just noted, such a loss was incurred in the recent tragic events in Afghanistan.

The Convention has the very noble mission of drawing up the World Heritage List, which now contains more than 730 sites of common human cultural heritage throughout the world. The international community is today cooperating to protect and develop those sites, the development of which is well coordinated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The considerable efforts made by UNESCO in recent decades to protect and maintain humankind's heritage from destruction have made its name synonymous with great cultural and humanistic values that embody the authenticity and preservation of whatever has worth and is precious in that cultural or natural heritage. UNESCO is the protecting body of the world's heritage, wherever and of whatever kind it may be. I could cite numerous examples of the vital role being played by UNESCO, first and foremost among which are its various campaigns throughout the world to protect humankind's heritage threatened with destruction. One such campaign, which Egypt holds in particular attachment, was that of the 1960s to protect the monuments of Nubia in southern Egypt from the destructive floods of the Nile. UNESCO has also adopted various conventions, including The Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, adopted in 1954, and the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.

The broad institutional experience of UNESCO is important and makes that organization the ideal vehicle for giving new impetus to the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage, along with all interested States and other United Nations and international and civil society agencies. As the Year draws to a close, we encourage UNESCO to pursue its tireless efforts to protect the cultural heritage of humankind. We also urge all States to support UNESCO in fulfilling its noble mission to convert international solidarity into joint action to protect our common cultural heritage.

On this occasion, I wish to express our profound gratitude for the participation of the Greek Minister of Culture and other representatives in this meeting. Greece, of course, has a great and ancient history and civilization and has amply contributed to the Mediterranean dialogue for millennia. We hope that mankind will be able to protect the heritage of dialogue and constructive tolerance among civilizations.

Mr. Venizelos (Greece): Greece regards the decision of the General Assembly of the United Nations to declare 2002 the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage as a major political event of international significance. We therefore take particular pleasure in attending today's special session and the various events organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

This is an excellent opportunity to present before the Assembly three points of great interest with respect to Greek, as well as global, cultural heritage.

Greece is currently preparing for the Athens 2004 Olympic Games. The Olympic ideal and the noble tradition of the Olympic Games arouse deep emotions throughout the whole international community, bringing the world's people together around the Olympic flame and the Olympic truce. They are elements common to both Greek and global cultural heritage. They offer a characteristic example of the importance of the coexistence of material monuments, such as that of ancient Olympia, with intangible monuments such as the Olympic values of peace, competition and coexistence.

As a member of the European Union, Greece is organizing the most contemporary Olympic Games of the twenty-first century and has the unique advantage of being able to offer the authenticity of the Olympic sites and ideals. The Olympic Games are a very significant example of the important role played by cultural heritage in social and economic development.

In the context of the Olympic preparations, Greece is currently in the process of organizing, in association with UNESCO and the International Olympic Committee, a new international institution, the Cultural Olympiad, whose core message is the necessity of a culture of civilizations. It is essential that the international community acknowledge that, all too often, protracted military conflicts and major international problems are rooted in issues of religion, language, or ethnicity. In other words, they are, at their most profound level, cultural issues. The concept of a culture of civilizations is the only stance to ensure peaceful and meaningful dialogue between different cultures and to transform cultural differences into bridges of understanding and not into reasons for friction, misunderstanding and armed conflict.

However, the concept of a culture of civilizations also has its material aspect, involving the protection of symbolic monuments in regions of the world afflicted by hostilities, such as Afghanistan and Kosovo. A programme pursuing such protection is being promoted by the Cultural Olympiad in association with UNESCO.

As part of the preparations for the Olympic Games and the Cultural Olympiad, the New Acropolis Museum is currently under construction in Athens. It is our hope that the new museum will provide a home for the Parthenon Marbles in their entirety, which, unfortunately, are currently divided between Athens and London. We very much hope that the proposals we have put forward for the organization of a joint exhibition of the Parthenon sculptures in Athens, under the aegis of the Museum of the Acropolis and the British Museum, will eventually be accepted. Our proposal is to assure the return of the marbles to Athens in the legal form of a long-term loan from the British Museum to the new Museum of the Acropolis.

Greece is a country in which cultural heritage is celebrated every day. In Europe, as you know, we devote certain days each year to the commemoration of the common European cultural heritage. I believe it would be useful to devote one day each year to the celebration of our global cultural heritage — a day when all the monuments belonging to the UNESCO list of world heritage sites will be open to the public, sending a message of the universality of cultural heritage.

The protection of the cultural heritage of the world's countries must be regarded as a duty resting in the hands of humanity as a whole. Such a responsibility will never be seen as anything more than a romantic ideal unless practical measures are taken providing international financial aid in support of that specific objective. It is my belief that such a provision must be included in any relevant resolution to be adopted by the General Assembly.

Mr. Wang Yingfan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): It is, indeed, timely and necessary that the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly proclaimed 2002 as the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage. Cultural heritage bears witness to the development of human society and serves as an essential carrier of human civilization. It has played a vital part in the promotion of mutual understanding among countries, as well as in the enhancement of communication among different cultures and civilizations. To protect and to make good use of world cultural heritage is a common responsibility of all people in the world. This year, in observation of the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage, UNESCO and other agencies have been organizing a series of events and activities. UNESCO has made tremendous efforts to raise public awareness throughout the world for the protection of cultural heritage. Its efforts are reaping very good results. For that, we would like to express our appreciation.

China is a country with an ancient civilization and a long history. China has numerous natural and cultural relics. They are not only the invaluable heritage of the Chinese nation but an important part of the world cultural and natural heritage, as well. The Chinese Government has always attached importance to the protection, construction, planning and management of scenic spots and places of cultural interest, as well as to historical sites. It has persistently followed the guiding principle of vigorous protection, integrated management, sound development and sustainable utilization. In the process of its economic development, China is making all efforts to preserve historical and cultural sites and has zealously devoted itself to reconciling history with modern times so that they may coexist harmoniously. China has so far registered 28 world cultural and natural heritage sites. It has always actively supported and participated in UNESCO's activities for the development and protection of the world cultural and natural heritage. It has already acceded to three international conventions,

including the Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage. China has made its efforts and done its part in contributing to the protection of world cultural and natural heritage.

Cultural heritage belongs to not only one country and one nation but to all humankind. To protect cultural heritage is to protect the common history of humankind. As one of the sponsors of the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage, China stands ready to make concerted efforts with the rest of the international community to protect and to make good use of the rich historic and cultural heritage of humankind.

In observation of the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage, the Chinese Mission and UNESCO are currently sponsoring a World Cultural Heritage photo exhibition. We hope that this exhibition will play an active role in fostering the protection and use of cultural heritage.

Mr. McIvor (New Zealand): New Zealand is pleased to acknowledge and join the celebration of 4 December as the day for Cultural Heritage, marking the end of the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage. We would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to all involved in organizing the year, particularly the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for its lead role.

There is a well-known mountain on New Zealand's North Island called Mount Tongariro. It is volcanic, a massive cone that, fortunately, remains dormant most of the time. This mountain, together with its surrounding land, became New Zealand's first national park well over 100 years ago. It was also the first of three New Zealand sites to be inscribed on the World Heritage List. Tongariro National Park is on the List as both a natural and cultural site, due to its largely unspoiled natural landscape and strong indigenous cultural association.

Tongariro is a part of New Zealand that we are pleased to share through the World Heritage Convention, as part of the international community's collective cultural heritage. Given its geographical location, it is also, incidentally, the first site of recognized global cultural heritage to be warmed by the sun of the new day. In a way, the world's commitment to the Year of Cultural Heritage began at the summit of that mountain in December 2001 and will end there too. Tongariro, including the cultural values which are part of its very being, has been strengthened by the International Year now drawing to a close.

New Zealand's official celebrations to mark this year's Day for Cultural Heritage began with a dawn ceremony performed this morning by the leaders of the Tangata Whenua, the indigenous people of New Zealand. These celebrations involved a wide range of ethnic communities which together make up the diverse cultural fabric of New Zealand society. These groups also participated in a series of activities that took place throughout New Zealand during the past year.

The South Pacific — its ocean and lands — covers almost one third of the earth's surface. It is rich in cultural heritage, of which those of us from that part of the world are naturally very proud. It is an honour for New Zealand to have announced just a few weeks ago its candidature for a seat on the World Heritage Committee at next year's elections, where we will want to represent our home region, including all that it offers to the world's cultural heritage.

New Zealand supports ongoing efforts by the international community to promote and protect the world's cultural heritage. As part of our commitment, New Zealand is pleased to offer its support for the draft resolution on the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage.

Mr. Maiga (Mali) (*spoke in French*): The celebration today of the conclusion of the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage provides us with the opportunity to take stock of actions taken to preserve, to make aware and to make use of cultural heritage and its contribution to strengthening peace and mutual understanding among nations of the world.

Cultural heritage as a set of artefacts and non-material values bequeathed to us by our ancestors, encompasses all that is tied to the history of a family, a town or a nation.

An indisputable witness of the past, cultural heritage is cultural identity, a feeling of belonging for each component of a nation and a source of inspiration. It is the treasure that bears the undeniable imprints of our past. One of the most important reasons for preserving cultural heritage is that it constitutes the main source of information about history. It is by looking at the past that we will be able to build the

present and the future. This has been the credo of all nations.

Recent history of African nations illustrates this very well. The independence of these nations has awakened a discussion of identity and an interest in the past. My country, Mali, situated at the heart of West Africa and at the crossroads of two worlds, black sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab-Berber world, possesses the richest and most diversified cultural heritage in West Africa. This heritage comes from the myriad archaeological sites of the interior delta of the Niger River, the lake-dwelling Mémazone and the illustrious architecture of the land of Djenné, Timbuktu, Ségou, as well as the sanctuaries of Tellem in the land of the Dogon. Already, three of these sites, namely, Timbuktu, Djenné and the Bangiagara cliffs are registered on UNESCO's World Heritage List. At present, with the registration of the Tomb of the Askias in Gao, for which a file is now being prepared with the help of UNESCO, we envisage that Mali, together with Ethiopia, will become the sub-Saharan African country with the greatest number of cultural riches on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

This is an opportunity to hail the actions of UNESCO. Despite its meagre financial means, it has been able to elicit a greater realization of the need to preserve cultural heritage and continues to take necessary action to protect historic sites and monuments that are without a doubt representative symbols of the way in which mankind has evolved through the ages.

The preservation of cultural heritage must remain at the heart of the international community's concerns. In various parts of the world, cultural heritage is threatened with destruction. The indifference of local populations and decision makers is often the result of a lack of knowledge, the main reason for the lack of protection of cultural heritage. Despite the wealth of Africa's cultural heritage and the numerous advantages it offers, the sector of preservation and re-evaluation of Africa's cultural heritage is only the subject of occasional projects with extremely limited funds.

The weak institutional capacity for protecting cultural heritage is exacerbated by the fact that populations do not always understand the need to protect their heritage. To this one must add the economic difficulties suffered by the developing countries. The preservation of cultural heritage is relegated to a secondary rank compared to such imperatives of development as achieving food self-sufficiency, industrialization and building socio-economic infrastructure. Thus, conserving one's heritage is relegated to low priority on the pretext of it being too expensive and not worth the small return on investment.

Likewise, the effects of globalization and the unprecedented developments in communications expose more than ever the most vulnerable peoples to the looting of their cultural heritage and the loss of their cultural identity.

The decade that has just come to an end was a decisive turning point in realizing the importance of culture in the process of development. Culture is of primary importance in the social, economic and political development of contemporary societies. The claim of cultural identity is necessary for developing countries in a world that is undergoing constant change. Cultural heritage is a factor of development for all countries. Its preservation and re-evaluation should not be considered synonymous with becoming introverted and insular in terms of traditions. Cultural heritage that is well preserved will maintain its values and thus attract both foreign and domestic visitors, thereby contributing to a country's economic development.

Preservation of cultural heritage of a people contributes to maintaining its cultural identity. Work in this area is not just for professionals in the field but must involve all people at the local level as well.

Culture is also an important factor that can contribute to strengthening peace within societies and among nations. As a pillar of ancient civilizations, Africa is confronted with conflict and war that make its population highly vulnerable as victims of atrocities. Facing this violence, we cannot be content merely with putting out the flames. Today, we have to find a way to act on the causes of these conflicts.

We know that our culture provides us with values that make it possible for us to keep crises that lead to war at a distance. With its numerous cultural practices in the area of conflict resolution, our culture is a tool for peace. The celebration of the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage gives us an opportunity to think about strategies and actions to better preserve our cultural heritage.

In that regard, Mali is convinced that such strategies and actions can be centred around the following elements: greater involvement by people in the protection of cultural heritage; enhancing institutional capacity with regard to managing cultural heritage; promoting the fulfilment of the role of culture and its place in development; developing public and private cultural activities that could directly or indirectly raise awareness of the need to protect our cultural artefacts; training the owners of cultural sites and other elements of cultural heritage about how to protect them; creating local museums to preserve cultural artefacts; raising people's awareness about the role of cultural heritage in reducing poverty and establishing an inventory of cultural heritage.

The celebration of the end of the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage must also be a starting point to bring about national and international realization of the need for greater mobilization and a firm commitment to preserve the common heritage of mankind. That must be translated into substantive support for the efforts of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and of the relevant national institutions.

Mr. Morikawa (Japan): The United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage concludes today. Over the past year, many efforts have been made by different parties, led by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). On the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Natural and Cultural Heritage, the Venice Congress was held from 14 to 16 November, with a view to raising awareness of the necessity of safeguarding the cultural heritage of humankind and accelerating concrete efforts to that end.

As a serious participant in these joint efforts, the Government of Japan expects that the UNESCO report to be presented at the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly — hopefully by its Director-General, Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura — will chart the direction for the mid- and long-term follow-up efforts of the international community on the basis of the outcome of the Year.

Having said that, I would like to touch upon two issues to which my Government attaches great importance. First, efforts to safeguard cultural heritage should be better coordinated with other United Nations activities. The rebuilding of cultural landmarks systematically destroyed during conflicts, such as the Mostar bridge, which is an important part of the Bosnian cultural heritage in Bosnia and Herzegovina, is a symbolic effort towards reconciliation and coexistence that will contribute to the peace-building process.

In Cambodia, Angkor has always been a symbol of national unity, and it has now become a focal point of international cooperation in the restoration and preservation of invaluable historical monuments. My Government has been taking part in that fruitful cooperation through the UNESCO/Japan Trust Fund for the Preservation of World Cultural Heritage. In recent years, the Angkor site has become an important foothold for the social and economic development of Cambodia.

Secondly, the international community should strengthen its efforts to preserve its intangible cultural heritage. I am convinced that safeguarding that heritage will play an increasingly important role in our culture and society, as it is a reflection of the creativity and diversity of the human spirit. Facing the profound changes that were occurring in its society due to rapid industrialization, Japan adopted legislation in this area as early as 1950. We believe that our experience might serve as a useful reference for many countries facing the unprecedented trend towards globalization. Through the UNESCO/Japan Trust Fund for intangible cultural heritage, which was established in 1993, the Japanese Government has been very actively contributing to such UNESCO efforts as its 1993 proclamation of masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity.

Miss Clarke (Barbados), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Furthermore, my delegation welcomes the steps taken so far by UNESCO and the international community towards the adoption of the convention for the safeguard of intangible cultural heritage. We are ready to participate actively in the negotiations on this subject, with a view to the adoption of the convention by UNESCO's General Conference at its thirty-third session.

As was declared by UNESCO's Director-General last year, after the adoption of resolution 56/8, proclaiming the year 2002 as the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage, all have a stake in the common

heritage of humanity, regardless of geographic location. Safeguarding the cultural heritage of humankind requires tireless and continuous efforts on the part of each and every partner in the international community. I would like to conclude my statement by assuring the Assembly of the determination of the Government of Japan to continue to participate in the efforts of the international community under the leadership of UNESCO.

Mr. Kulyk (Ukraine): As we mark the end of the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage — which, symbolically, coincides with the thirtieth anniversary of the World Heritage Convention — my delegation notes with satisfaction the tangible results achieved by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Heritage Committee in this area.

I should like to avail myself of this opportunity to express special gratitude to Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, UNESCO Director-General. We hope that his overview of the activities carried out during the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage, together with the report of the Secretary-General, will not only give us a clear and comprehensive picture of the progress that has been made to date, but also determine practical ways to move forward. Since UNESCO has been designated as the lead agency for the Year, it is important, in our view, to continue the important work that has already been done.

We would like in particular to reaffirm the importance of the further development of international mechanisms to protect the world cultural heritage. To that end, we believe that it would be helpful to hold an international conference to review the effectiveness of current international instruments in this field and to promote the drafting of new international standard-setting instruments.

From our perspective, such an initiative is in keeping with the guidelines of UNESCO's strategy to promote international cooperation to protect the world cultural heritage. Indeed, it could become a useful tool in addressing new demands in the area of standard-setting and in encouraging Member States to take appropriate measures in this regard.

Ukraine — a country that still feels the pain of having seen its churches ruined, its archives burned and its art masterpieces destroyed — has always been, and remains, a strong advocate of the consolidated international efforts aimed at protecting the global and national cultural heritage. In the framework of the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage, Ukraine has taken practical steps to promote our country's cultural heritage.

First, in keeping with our National Plan of Action, we have focused our efforts on the further improvement of national legislation in this field. So far, a number of international legal acts have been prepared for ratification by the Ukrainian Parliament; in particular, we expect that the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage will be ratified in the near future.

We have also successfully implemented a number of technical and economic projects in order to ensure that Ukraine's heritage is well protected at both the national and local levels. For this purpose, a national programme aimed at safeguarding our cultural heritage was elaborated in order to ensure the necessary funding from national and local budgets.

Thirdly, our country has actively continued to select new cultural and natural properties and to prepare them for inscription on the World Heritage List. In this regard, I would like to inform the Assembly that in 2003 and 2004 Ukraine will host two regional seminars to determine cultural and natural properties for inscription on the World Heritage List.

Let me conclude by expressing Ukraine's strong commitment and readiness to further contribute to the efforts of the United Nations aimed at reaching the lofty goal of protecting the world cultural heritage.

Here I would like also to express our sincere appreciation to the delegation of Egypt for coordinating a draft resolution on the agenda item under our consideration. We hope that this important document will soon be successfully adopted by the General Assembly.

Mr. Cappagli (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The principal goal of the draft resolution that is to be introduced in due course before the General Assembly, and which my country intends to co-sponsor, will not be solely to conclude today the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage. Rather — and especially — it will be to invite Member States to work together with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to continue to promote and protect the world cultural heritage, through an ongoing

process of consciousness-raising and education with respect to national and world patrimony.

Argentina recognizes and appreciates the invaluable role that UNESCO has been playing in the protection of the world cultural heritage and commends the work it has done in that field, and expects that it will continue to lead the way in this process of preserving the world heritage.

The fact that more than 700 sites have been inscribed on the World Heritage List is clear testimony to the importance that Member States attach to the preservation of such heritage. However, many of these sites have deteriorated or are in danger of ruin. The international community must therefore continue to pool its efforts and to cooperate to protect that heritage, on the understanding that to harm it is to harm also our memory and our shared legacy.

As we pointed out last year, the commemoration of the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage coincided with the thirtieth anniversary of the World Heritage Convention, which my country deems particularly important. That Convention has to date received more than 170 ratifications and has thus become a kind of universal Convention that provides a frame of reference for all legal instruments designed to protect our cultural heritage in all its aspects. Thus, it has become an instrument for the sustainable development of all societies through dialogue and mutual understanding.

Argentina avails itself of this opportunity to renew its commitment to protecting not only cultural heritage but also our own, as well as the global, natural heritage. We should like to refer in this regard to two key aspects: the role of local communities in heritage protection and the need to generate additional resources towards that end.

Local communities have a pivotal role in the identification, protection and management of cultural and natural heritage. In this sense, supporting these communities — their know-how and their traditional practices — is of the essence for preserving that heritage, in particular with regard to cultural landscapes. That is why projects aimed at protecting natural and cultural heritage should be considered concrete ways of cooperating in the economic and social development of peoples and, in that vein, as concrete ways of reweaving a social fabric rent asunder by crises of all kinds.

Secondly, we must come up with additional resources through innovative initiatives such the World Heritage Partnerships Initiative, which was welcomed by the World Heritage Committee this year, so that, through cooperation with partners in civil society and the private sector, we can generate the wherewithal to allow us to protect global heritage sites in the short, medium and long term, and to ensure the proper training of the human resources needed to preserve and manage them.

Argentina urges those countries that have not yet done so to accede to the World Heritage Convention and to other international legal instruments related to the protection of cultural heritage. These include, in particular, the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two Protocols, the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property and the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage. I should like to point out the importance of the fact that all of UNESCO's legal instruments designed to protect the cultural heritage are interrelated and mutually reinforcing.

The commemoration of the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage provided a framework for the international community to conduct a series of events designed to sensitize the world to the importance of preserving that heritage for generations to come.

With regard to activities by my country to disseminate information and provide training, I would like to highlight, inter alia, the holding in August, in the province of Córdoba, of the second seminar on the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, which took place near the Jesuit Block and Estancias of Córdoba — a site that has been on the World Heritage List since 2000; the conference on the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage, which took place from 30 October to 1 November; and initiatives in various areas, such as among national police forces and at peacekeeping operations training centres, to provide information about the content and scope of UNESCO conventions relating to the protection of the cultural heritage, as well as their relevance during rebuilding phases.

Above and beyond our work at the national level, Argentina actively participates in UNESCO's standard-setting activities. In particular, we played a very active

role in negotiations leading up to the recent adoption of the Convention of the Underwater Cultural Heritage; in the review process for the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, currently under way; and in the ongoing negotiations to elaborate an instrument to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage.

I should like to conclude by reaffirming Argentina's commitment to protecting the world heritage and our readiness to continue to work in all relevant forums to preserve that heritage.

Mr. Vento (Italy): Given its cultural traditions and artistic history, Italy accords the highest priority to the cause of world heritage. That is why we wholeheartedly supported the proclamation of 2002 as the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage. We welcome the fact that that proclamation coincided with the thirtieth anniversary of the World Heritage Convention, which was celebrated in Venice from 14 to 16 November with a special United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) conference, entitled "World Heritage 2002: Shared Legacy, Common Responsibility", hosted by the Italian Government. Over the past two decades, Italy has hosted a number of UNESCO events on cultural heritage, including sessions of the Cultural Heritage Committee in Florence in 1983 and in Naples in 1987 and, more recently, the Culture Counts Conference, hosted in Florence in 1999, jointly sponsored by the World Bank, UNESCO and Italy.

The Venice conference in November brought together 600 experts from all over the world and successfully promoted awareness of the need for greater investment in cultural heritage as a vehicle for development and international cohesion. It also fostered the broad recognition that the Convention, ratified by 175 States parties, is still the most valid and universal international legal instrument to safeguard cultural and natural heritage. Nevertheless, during the conference it became clear that there was a need to explore an evolved and integrated interpretation of the Convention, respecting its spirit and objectives while at the same time responding to new problems, in conjunction with other directly or indirectly applicable instruments of international law.

The Convention has succeeded in forging a universally accepted compromise between the seemingly opposed concepts of culture and nature, national sovereignty and international responsibility, and cultural identity and universality. In that sense, the Convention represents a new and unsurpassed affirmation of responsibility-sharing and interdependency among generations, States, civil society and new transnational actors — non-governmental organizations, community associations and the international community players — in the safeguarding of the human environment.

Italy has always shared the spirit of the World Heritage Convention, which requires its States parties to ensure the identification, conservation, enhancement and transmission to future generations of their own cultural and natural heritage. The World Heritage List, on which 730 sites are currently registered, is a major instrument of that mission.

We are well aware of the practical problems in managing such a long and varied list, and fully share the goal of achieving better balance and representation on it. To that end, the broadest possible support should be given to international cooperation, helping developing countries to build their capacity to identify and safeguard their heritage, pursuant to article 7 of the Convention.

In Italy's view, the World Heritage List must be characterized by credibility, rigorous evaluation criteria and, last but not least, dynamism. To achieve dialogue between cultures and preserve historical memory for future generations, it is not enough to protect the tangible heritage. It is in this conviction that Italy welcomes the priority that the Director-General of UNESCO has given to the protection of the intangible heritage, which by 2005 should lead to the adoption of a special legal instrument in that respect.

Adequate management of heritage is another top priority. Traditional conservation norms need to be backed up by adequate tools that harmonize conservation needs with the socio-economic capabilities involved in the enhancement process. To that end, the Italian Government is currently drafting model managing plans to serve as a point of reference for the numerous sites and parks of national importance that we have defined as cultural areas and districts. We use that term to refer to urban and extra-urban areas whose characteristics as sites of cultural activities point to their need for management through an integrated system of transportation, tourism and services. The aim is to enhance and promote both tangible and intangible

cultural resources. Italy is also in the process of approving a law that will provide for the establishment of local tourist systems. Those systems will provide new tools for joining the public and private sectors in a cooperative effort to promote integrated tourism strategies in areas with significant cultural connotations.

Italy will continue to support UNESCO's activities for the cause of world heritage with commitment and conviction. For several years now, we have dedicated extrabudgetary funds to capacity-building activities in various countries. Since 2001, when it signed a Joint Declaration with UNESCO, Italy has contributed $750,000 to support the institutional activities of the World Heritage Centre, with a particular view to promoting a global strategy aimed at widening the range of sites inscribed on the List and to enhancing the Centre's management capabilities. As another example of our dedication to the cause of world heritage, I can mention that, following the inscription on the List of the Minaret of Jam in Afghanistan, Italy immediately contributed $500,000 to the project for its consolidation.

The same spirit of solidarity that motivated us to participate in several UNESCO projects has inspired our bilateral cooperation. This is focused mostly on joint projects for the protection and restoration of monuments, on archaeological research and feasibility studies of natural and cultural parks and on the use of modern technologies for the recovery of stolen cultural heritage. In all those undertakings, particular attention is paid to training and the development of local expertise.

The preservation and enhancement of the world cultural heritage is at the core of the interests and the responsibilities of the international community and of UNESCO, a body that it is our collective duty to constantly make more relevant and effective. The full re-entry of the United States into the Paris-based organization, which my Government warmly welcomes, will certainly contribute significantly to the fulfilment of that lofty goal.

Safeguarding the cultural, natural and intangible heritage is perhaps the most concrete way to preserve cultural diversity and to meet one of today's main challenges: how to harmonize the process of globalization with the needs of local and non-mainstream cultures. In that area too, Italy can make a contribution by sharing its own experience. In fact, it would be difficult to find a more diverse culture within such a relatively small territory anywhere else in the world. As a result of our geography and our history, we inherited a nearly unrivalled density of languages, legacies and traditions. Yet we have also succeeded in building a unified system that teaches tolerance and respect for diversity, promoting peaceful coexistence in a process of intellectual human and social enrichment.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 23. The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 23.

Reports of the Fifth Committee

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now consider the reports of the Fifth Committee on agenda item 12 and on sub-items (a) to (e) and (j) of agenda item 17.

If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the reports of the Fifth Committee that are before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote. The positions of delegations regarding the recommendations of the Fifth Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records. May I remind members that, under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401, the General Assembly agreed that

> "When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, i.e., either in the Committee or in plenary meeting, unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee."

May remind delegations that, also in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendations contained in the reports of the Fifth Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we shall proceed to take decisions in the same manner

as was done in the Fifth Committee, unless the Secretariat is notified otherwise.

Agenda item 12 (*continued*)

Report of the Economic and Social Council

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/57/624)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now consider the report of the Fifth Committee dealing with those chapters of the report of the Economic and Social Council that were allocated to the Fifth Committee. The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 4 of its report.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt the draft decision?

The draft decision was adopted (decision 57/517).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 12.

Agenda item 17

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(a) Appointment of members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/57/605)

The Acting President: The Fifth Committee recommends in paragraph 7 of its report that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2003: Mr. Homero Luis Hernández (Dominican Republic), Mr. Vladimir Kuznetsov (Russian Federation), Mr. Thomas Mazet (Germany), Ms. Susan McLurg (United States of America) and Mr. Mounir Zahran (Egypt).

May I take it that the Assembly appoints those persons?

It was so decided.

(b) Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/57/606)

The Acting President: In paragraph 5 of its report, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the Committee on Contributions for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2003: Mr. Alvaro Gurgel de Alencar (Brazil), Mr. Sergei I. Mareyev (Russian Federation), Mr. Bernard G. Meijerman (Netherlands), Mr. Hae-yun Park (Republic of Korea), Mr. Ugo Sessi (Italy) and Mr. Wu Gang (China).

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint those persons?

It was so decided.

(c) Confirmation of the appointment of members of the Investments Committee

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/57/607)

The Acting President: The Fifth Committee recommends in paragraph 5 of its report that the General Assembly confirm the appointment by the Secretary-General of the following persons as members of the Investments Committee for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2003: Ms. Francine J. Bovich (United States of America), Mr. Takeshi Ohta (Japan) and Mr. Peter Stormonth-Darling (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland).

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to confirm the appointment of those persons?

It was so decided.

(d) Appointment of members of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/57/608)

The Acting President: In paragraph 5 of its report, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal for a four-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2003: Mr. Kevin Haugh (Ireland) and Ms. Jacqueline R. Scott (United States of America).

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint those persons?

It was so decided.

(e) International Civil Service Commission

(i) Appointment of members of the Commission

(ii) Designation of the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the Commission

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/57/609)

The Acting President: In paragraph 10 (a) of its report, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint the following persons as members of the International Civil Service Commission for a four-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2003: Mr. Mohsen Bel Hadj Amor (Tunisia), Mr. Daasebre Oti Boateng (Ghana), Mr. José Ramón Sanchis Muñoz (Argentina), Ms. Anita Szlazak (Canada) and Mr. Eugeniusz Wyzner (Poland).

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint those persons?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The Fifth Committee also recommends, in paragraph 10 (b) of its report, that the General Assembly designate Mr. Mohsen Bel Hadj Amor (Tunisia) as Chairman of the International Civil Service Commission for a four-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2003.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to designate the person recommended as Chairman of the Commission?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: In paragraph 10 (c) of its report, the Fifth Committee further recommends that the General Assembly designate Mr. Eugeniusz Wyzner as Vice-Chairman of the International Civil Service Commission for a four-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2003.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to designate the person recommended as Vice-Chairman of the Commission?

It was so decided.

(j) Appointment of a member of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/57/610)

The Acting President: In paragraph 5 of its report, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint Mr. Andrei Vitalievitch Kovalenko (Russian Federation) as a member of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee for a term of office beginning on 1 January 2003 and ending on 31 December 2003.

May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to appoint Mr. Kovalenko?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 17.

Agenda item 47

Declaration of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity on the aerial and naval military attack against the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya by the present United States Administration in April 1986

The Acting President: It is my understanding that after the necessary consultations, consideration of this item may be deferred to the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the provisional agenda of the fifty-eighth session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 47.

Agenda item 48

Armed Israeli aggression against the Iraqi nuclear installations and its grave consequences for the established international system concerning the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and international peace and security

The Acting President: It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this

item to the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the provisional agenda of the fifty-eighth session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 48.

Agenda item 49

Consequences of the Iraqi occupation of and aggression against Kuwait

The Acting President: It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the provisional agenda of the fifty-eighth session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 49.

Agenda item 50

Implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations

The Acting President: It is my understanding that there is no request to consider this item at the present session.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include this item in the provisional agenda for the fifty-eighth session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 50.

Agenda item 51

Launching of global negotiations on international economic cooperation for development

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the Assembly's wish to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the provisional agenda of the fifty-eighth session?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 51.

Programme of work

The President in the Chair.

The President: I would like to announce that the open-ended informal consultations of the plenary of the General Assembly on United Nations reform, which, as the Assembly is aware, were scheduled for the afternoon of Friday, 6 December 2002, have been postponed until next week. The exact date of the informal consultations will be announced at the plenary meeting to be held on the morning of Friday, 6 December.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.